

**SPECIAL ASSEMBLY MEETING
THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU, ALASKA**

Meeting Minutes - November 11, 2015

MEETING NO. 2015-29: The Special Meeting of the City and Borough of Juneau Assembly, held in the Assembly Chambers of the Municipal Building, was called to order at 2:00 p.m. by Mayor Greg Fisk.

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Assembly Present: Mary Becker, Karen Crane, Greg Fisk, Maria Gladziszewski, Loren Jones, Jesse Kiehl, and Kate Troll.

Assembly Absent: Jerry Nankervis, Debbie White.

School Board Members Present: Brian Holst, Josh Keaton, Emil Mackey, Andi Story.

Staff Present: Kim Kiefer, City Manager; Amy Mead, Municipal Attorney; Laurie Sica, Municipal Clerk; Rorie Watt, Engineering / Public Works Director; Bob Bartholomew, Finance Director; Mark Miller, JSD Superintendent; David Means, JSD Administrative Services Manager; Bridgette Weiss, Student Services.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None.

III. AGENDA TOPICS

A. Overview of the Juneau School District by Superintendent Miller

Mark Miller provided a slide presentation with an overview of JSD operations. He said the community could expect flat funding at best in the coming years from the state. He spoke about placing funds in reserve - JSD had .05% of its budget in a reserve account, and the recommended level was 8%. He thanked the Assembly for funding to the cap.

He spoke about increased graduation rates and student performance in the common core testing. Juneau ranked second in testing of the five large school districts, with Kenai first, followed by Juneau, Anchorage, Mat-Su and Fairbanks in math and english. He spoke about early childhood education efforts in integrating special needs students starting in pre-school.

Mr. Holst distributed the JSD strategic plan for 2015-2020 and said there is not specific funding for Pre-Kindergarten programs now.

Mr. Miller spoke about school activities. The district budgets \$390,000 and CBJ funds \$565,000, and this does not include any travel. The community will need to raise nearly \$1.7 million to fully fund activities.

Ms. Becker asked about the decrease in population. Mr. Miller said that Gastineau lost 56 students this year and he is not sure why. The new apartments installed are not "producing

kids" and there were a number of homes for sale along Douglas Highway. Ms. Becker asked if boundary exceptions were allowed and Mr. Miller said they were allowed, but there were not many. Ms. Story suggested that several students moved to the Montessori program. Mr. Miller said that when a school has 175 students or more there is a higher reimbursement rate per student.

Ms. Gladziszewski asked how the graduation rate compares between Juneau, AK and nationally. Mr. Miller said that Juneau's rate is 88%, statewide is 77% and nationally it is 80% that graduate. Ms. Gladziszewski asked why JSD is not number one on many measures given the large amount of community support. Mr. Miller said JSD was high on most significant measures. Mr. Holst said not all populations do as well, including the low income and minority populations. Ms. Story said the increase in native graduation went from the 50% range to the 70% range in recent years, so it was moving in the right direction.

Ms. Troll said she thought Assembly funds were directed to improve the student teacher ratio. In the first year JSD chose to put those funds to high school activities, and now the funds are going to reserves. She asked why the pupil teacher ratio was diminished.

Mr. Miller said it was important to maintain some reserves due to the uncertainty of funding from the state. The PTR was going up. Given the financial situation we are in, he did not see where we can cut in other areas, in order to increase PTR - that is our most expensive item. We have cut coaches to put teachers back in to the classroom. Getting more teachers in to lower PTR would not be sustainable at this time.

Mr. Means said JSD maintained elementary PTR from last year to this year. We are concerned about PTR at high school and middle school in order to provide a depth of courses for graduation. Ms. Troll spoke about the "buy back" list the Assembly reviewed in the past, which created an expectation, that the Assembly's commitment to funding at higher levels would contribute to increase in PTR. Mr. Miller said the commitment to make it stable and not make it worse is what we have to look at.

Ms. Crane said the potential for "disaster" is high in the coming year and the base student allocation would not have headway unless the legislature deals with the budget before then. We have to solve the overall program before we can solve the education funding problem. The legislature needs to start acting on this overall problem this year and all groups should work towards this effort, vs. just education funding.

Ms. Story spoke about her work with the statewide school board and said there has been dialogue about the overall state budget. Research shows that more important than PTR is the quality of instruction. We need to support the teachers in their growth and learning.

Mr. Jones spoke about the effects of the "dominant culture" in education test scores and graduation rates and asked what we are doing to improve the education level of the non-dominant culture and improve test scores of minority students in a flat funding environment, when all teaching and textbooks are geared to the dominant culture. Mr. Miller said that students of color and low economic background fall behind early and continue to lose ground. We are trying to identify the slightest hints when students fall behind and intervene with RTI, Response to Intervention or response to instruction. Sometimes it is a matter of tutoring or support after school. We do not like to take children out of class, or separate students as they have to all function together as a society. Mr. Jones said cutbacks on teacher aids do not help in this matter. Mr. Miller said RTI was a priority, and with increases in PTR there will be

setbacks. Activities help students engage and those cuts do not help either. Everyone takes a hit in times like these.

Ms. Story spoke about community partnerships with native organizations, career tech opportunities and the challenges of low income students to participate in activities. We still don't have activity fees and we are concerned about equity in participation in activities.

Mayor Fisk asked about intramurals and Mr. Means said JSD budgets \$30,000 for intramurals in the high schools.

Mr. Keaton said that JSD was working to address improving the situation for low income and minority students, and pointed to the success of programming at Riverbend. We have cut extended learning for gifted and we are funneling resources to those who are more in need. He thought it was a delicate balance and JSD was doing a good job.

Ms. Story said JSD was offering a variety of advanced placement but there were insufficient students for those classes. However, many of JSD's students are entering colleges such as Stanford.

Mr. Jones said making the students "college ready" can't take the place of making students "employment ready." He sees students with high test scores and higher graduation rates and there is still a public opinion that students are not ready to go to work or go to college. Mr. Mackey said that some of this is just the way it has always been in comparing generations to each other in being sufficiently prepared. Every generation tends to bash the previous generation. We need to look for valid criticism. The numbers here show a steady correlation between GPA and test scores, they are tracked for the Alaska Performance Scholarship. One area to look at nationwide, is a teacher licensure program, beyond the first certification. We can ask the legislature to tighten up certification.

Ms. Troll said the AVID program was set up to make students more college ready and asked if this was still in place. Mr. Miller said yes and he thought JSD was beginning to see benefits. Ms. Story said there were cuts to AVID as well.

B. JSD Facility Planning and Joint Project Team

Ms. Kiefer introduced Mr. Watt and spoke about the interest in establishing a joint project team.

Mr. Watt said everyone has the same fear of future budgets and the discussion so far has been about hanging on to the education programs. The future shortfalls will put enormous pressure on facilities and the ending of the state reimbursement program will burden communities. The leftover moneys from the large projects were put into the smaller items of maintenance, such as boilers and broken sidewalks. This will be an annual problem. Most of our schools now are in good condition following a wave of renovation projects but there will be needs over time. It is important to put good effort into facility master planning and we need to be disciplined before making strong opinions. There will be hard choices and discussions to take place and these need to be made in a deliberative manner. We may find a planning consultant to help us with this process. In the past we had three members from each body on the joint project team.

Mayor Fisk said the purpose is to avoid having surprises and have a contingency plan and create a closer bond between the JSD and the Assembly. Mr. Miller said he would do a back flip if he heard one more time that we should not have built TMHS. The point is we need to have a thought out plan for school facilities to have facts behind actions we take.

Ms. Troll asked about money set aside for planning about the goal to determine how best to spend maintenance funds. Mr. Watt said he wanted a facility planning exercise to confirm that we are going to keep all facilities and if we are going to keep running them as we are today. We need to confirm the current level of expenditure in the facilities or realign the programs. Mr. Miller said school population was declining, and the numbers of seniors was increasing. At what point do you have more facilities than needed, redraw boundaries, re-purpose facilities, and this gets emotional very quickly, therefore an outside planner is very important.

Ms. Gladziszewski asked about the \$300,000 for a consultant, and what was the purpose of the project team and what was the expectation of the work. Mr. Watt said it was not a short, but an ongoing process over several years. It will wade into boundaries, number of facilities, and questions such as if a facility closed, would there be money for teachers. Mayor Fisk said the consultant would work tightly with the group and the group would carry the messages from the consultant and their deliberations back to each body. Mr. Watt said the consultant would help manage the process. Mr. Miller said this was not a static issue - each year the facilities aged and the situation evolved. Ms. Crane said she understood that the school district does not have a facilities plan regarding what each school needs for maintenance over time. I thought we were going to make that plan with this \$300,000. This would prepare us for budgeting. Mr. Jones said he thought this was the compromise due to not bonding for Marie Drake. That building was supposed to be obsolete years ago. Mayor Fisk said that he thought that building was part of the discussion. Mr. Watt said DOE has a boiler plate planning document for school renovation and the present value of the facilities can be plugged in to get an idea of facility maintenance costs over time, and we need that information - we don't have that information. The 70% funding partner left us.

Ms. Becker said the facilities director at JSD used to do this work, and we are going to spend \$300,000 on work formerly done by a \$100,000 employee. The joint project team used to discuss this work and approached the state for the funding needed to do the work. I find what you are talking about very different than what you are proposing.

Ms. Gladziszewski agreed and said she thought the funding was for the work Ms. Crane described. The work has not been done because we have had money from the state, but where is the city's plan for the same type of work? Ms. Kiefer said the same study needs to be done for city facilities.

Ms. Troll said she was confused as well and thought it would be specific and targeted and not the birds eye view. She asked if this effort cost \$300,000 - it seems high. The deferred maintenance gets into the weeds - do we know those high priority needs now and can we spend the \$500,000 on those needs?

Mr. Miller said his experience is that it is more than talk in this type of study, there are focus groups from the community to get input and we can't ignore the small maintenance pieces because if you are talking about re-purposing a facility, you need to know what shape those facilities are in. The bigger question is whether the facility is needed for the district and if other uses can be found is part of the discussion. It is a complex problem, needs community

interaction and research, projections, and we want to make sure that \$300,000 covers this effort.

Mayor Fisk asked if there is any disagreement that we need the joint project team? If not the team could move forward and iron some of these issues out regarding how the work and funding will be defined. Ms. Gladziszewski said she did not object, but she wants to have a clear purpose for this group. Mayor Fisk suggested having the group define its goals.

Mr. Watt suggested the purpose was to confirm or deny that we can continue to own and maintain the facilities that we have in the manner that we currently operate them. Ms. Becker said that was a program discussion. Mr. Kiehl said it needed to be both. Mr. Jones said the charter says the school board makes suggestions, the Assembly shall make the decisions, and there shall be a four person committee to make recommendations on all capital improvements within the school district. Mr. Jones said that is the starting point of this discussion.

Mr. Holst said the facilities committee and the board is not seeking to build new schools, and it came from the Assembly to spend \$300,000 in this way, so it is curious that there is not clarity. We gave a list to the Assembly, you gave the funding, and my interpretation is that the assembly saw that over the next five years we would return every year for facilities money and you wanted a clear rationale of how that money would be spent. If that is what it takes then we need to spend money on a consultant to tell us how that funding will be spent. JSD is not planning to build any buildings at this point, so whatever it takes to give the Assembly back-up for spending money on school maintenance is what we are discussing. Mayor Fisk said having a long term plan in addition to a facilities assessment seems reasonable and the funding does not seem lavish.

Ms. Troll said she would like the group to explore re-purposing options for facilities if that is in the mix. Ms. Gladziszewski said the purpose outlined by Mr. watt was sufficient for her. We can form any committee at any time.

Mayor Fisk asked if all agreed that a 30,000 foot view in addition to maintenance assessment was needed and there were nods. He asked if Jesse would be the Assembly's point person, they would determine who else would sit on this committee, and Mr. Holst said that he would work with their board to determine membership.

Mr. Bartholomew gave a short refresher on how the Assembly arrived at providing the \$800,000 for school maintenance funding.

C. The Future of Education in Juneau

Mayor Fisk said that education played an important role in economic development, and asked Mr. Holst to start out the discussion.

Mr. Holst said we look at talent and the need for talent. Trends are that businesses are getting smaller and having more need to innovate. He spent time recently in South Korea where they have some of the best schools in the world. In fifty years they have gone from one of the poorest to one of the wealthiest countries and they focus on the importance of education. We have lost a bit of this emphasis in the public schools in past years. Focusing on test scores is

making it harder for us to compete. At JEDC we place a lot of emphasis on education - STEM - so we can be competitive. We are an attractive community with many choices. Geography is less important now to where people work and the choice will be based on quality of life. Things like Eaglecrest are bigger than what a community of this size could normally support, but it makes it a good place to live. Many outside fishermen point to why they don't live here include better schools outside than here, so when we look at a great community we need to revisit schools. It is not enough to be adequate, but they need to be the type to grow our economy. The biggest return on investment in schools come the earlier you make it and if we can start at 3-4 years old, we would have a bigger impact on students throughout their lives. We need to start earlier so our kids are prepared.

Mr. Keaton said there is a problem with daycare in the community, and early education would be one less year of people needing to spend so much money on such little available care and this would be an incentive for people to move and stay in Juneau.

Ms. Story said that the U.S. educates everyone, and in many other countries they do not. She spoke about a national test and this one pointed out a few urban districts that had been outstanding and those focused on early childhood education and career tech. We need to have strong reading, writing and math, as systems are getting more complex.

Ms. Troll spoke about JSD "Dashboard Metrics" and asked where the JSD was heading using those metrics. Mr. Miller said JSD did an assessment report with those measures. What gets measured gets paid attention to - we are still working on initial assessments on some items. We are establishing baselines and we have goals and we will be monitoring this. The dashboard indicators are the results of what we are doing. We are doing programs which get measured.

Mayor Fisk said the percentage of students meeting full standards in math and english were still low. Mr Miller explained the new test and said they are still trying to figure the new standards out. It was really "common core" with a slight Alaska slant. Every state that has instituted this has seen this outcome - this has shifted radically over the last few years. Teachers are still catching up with the new standards and instructional techniques and there is a huge uproar in the nation over the questions. It is nice to know we are number two, but only 40% are meeting standards and 60% are not.

Ms. Glad asked about the standards. Mr. Miller said the test is harder, the standards are higher, and this is nationwide.

Mr Keaton said this was a single data point from a brand new test and in a few years we will see where this goes.

Ms. Story said the Commissioner of Education spoke to AASB about testing in schools.

Mr. Holst said one of the teachers in JSD uses a flip classroom approach - she provides the students with a lecture that they go home and watch on a device provided by the district and in the classroom they work on problems - this is valuable since there are some households that can't help with homework and this is a change that can have a big impact as long as the technology is available. We will also see widening of income disparity and this creates pressure on lower wage jobs.

Mr. Jones said there is the issue of teaching kids to survive whatever comes there way or teaching to the test. If we wait 3-4 years to determine that the test prepares them and we find

they haven't met standards, then we have lost time and done a disservice. He does not want to lose a generation of kids waiting for data points and that is not what education is about. A lot of this is up to teachers and he hoped that the district looked at things beyond standardized tests, and wasn't teaching to the test.

Mr. Miller said he grew up in the flashcard era because people needed to know information that is now available on the internet. What will make or break our kids is not whether or not they know something. It is whether they can take the information, innovate it and make new ideas with it. That is the big difference between then and now. This is a different way to educate and think about education.

Mayor Fisk said if we are doing a good job, we are teaching people to be lifelong learners. Ms. Troll said the average person now will change their career five times.

Ms. Story said the LOWV is working with 8th graders to ensure they all get to the capitol. Through the Kennedy Center "Any Given Child" program, there will be staff to help our teachers incorporate art in core english and math classes through a grant program.

Mr. Holst said the schools could not be expected to do education on their own and he named a number of community partners and programs. There are many community organizations supporting education in Juneau and we need to work together to leverage all of these contributions. He cited Kennewick schools improving due to leveraging community resources.

Ms. Gladziszewski said it takes more than JSD to be everything to all students so the Assembly would like to hear ways to mobilize the community to assist from the school board. We should have the best opportunities from our kids.

Mayor Fisk thanked all members present for the valuable input.

IV. ASSEMBLY COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

No further comments or questions.

V. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Assembly, the meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Signed: _____
Laurie Sica, Municipal Clerk

Signed: _____
Greg Fisk, Mayor